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SOUTH VIETNAM: Potential "third-force" aspirants are stirring in response to the role accorded neutralists in the cease-fire agreement.

Big Minh, one of the most prominent such figures, publicly signaled his availability last week by implying that he represents a majority "third entity" in South Vietnam. He said privately he is not interested in membership on the proposed neutral segment of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord (NCNRC), and indicated that he was referring to a leadership role in a new government.

Some An Quang Buddhists and Vietnamese exiles are interested in serving on the NCNRC. The Buddhists have publicly expressed interest and objected to the inclusion of the exiles whom they regard as late comers. One prominent exile, former emperor Bao Dai, reportedly is trying to return to South Vietnam to improve his chances of being chosen for the NCNRC.



For years the Communists have been attempting to influence potential third-force elements, and since the cease-fire, they have been showing greater interest in An Quang and other opposition groups. [redacted] reportedly is encouraging his contacts among the Vietnamese exiles to return to South Vietnam if they are to have any serious prospects of playing a third-force role.

The Thieu government has been highly suspicious of potential neutralist elements, but it now appears to be looking for candidates with whom it can co-operate for the third segment of the NCNRC. An independent Saigon paper recently claimed that the government has selected two An Quang senators and

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two moderate opposition politicians to be among its candidates. There is no information to confirm this report, but it is plausible that President Thieu would consider such figures if he were convinced they would be sympathetic to Saigon's cause.

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SUDAN: President Numayri is unlikely to bend to Arab pressure to go easy on the eight Black September terrorists.

Numayri blasted the terrorist movement in a very tough speech before the National Assembly yesterday. He said that the eight men would receive a fair trial according to Sudanese law, "justly applied." Numayri left little doubt as to the outcome when he added that the murders were a criminal act that had "nothing to do with revolution or courage." The penalty for murder in Sudan is death.

If Numayri is concerned about Arab reactions, he did not show it yesterday. Although once considered an Arab radical himself, the President has been at odds with the Egyptians as well as the Libyans over the last year or so, and he has divorced himself more and more from Arab affairs.

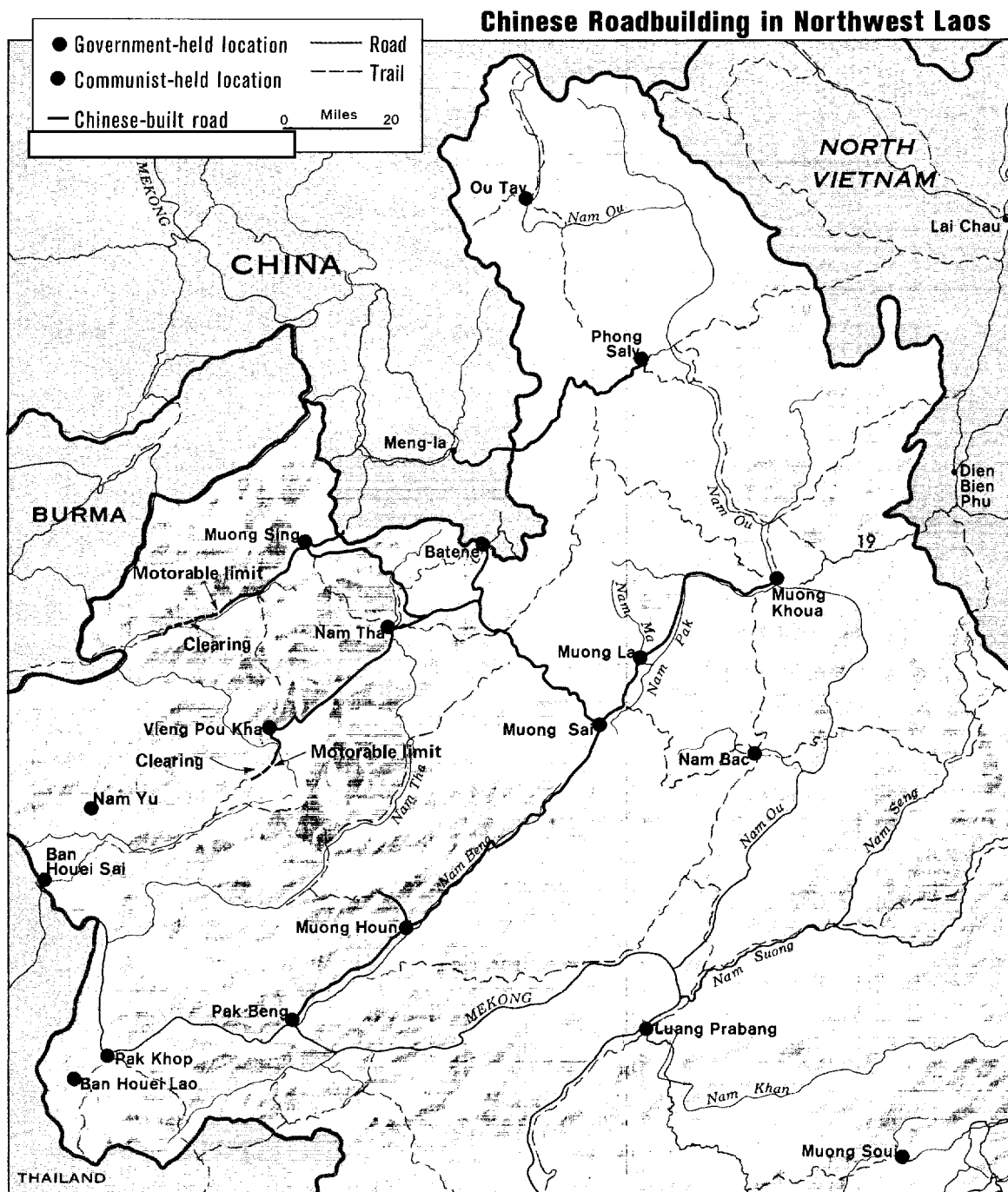
Numayri probably has little to fear from the more radical Arab states. Neither Libya nor Egypt has much influence in Khartoum and there is little popular sympathy for terrorism in Sudan. Most Sudanese, in fact, were probably as appalled as Numayri by the murders.

Of the other Arab states, Jordan's King Husayn has so far voiced the strongest condemnation of the Khartoum terrorists. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait have privately assessed the action as a blow to the Arab cause but show no sign of making their views public. Lebanese Prime Minister Salam's statement Tuesday reflected what he believes to be broad sympathy for the terrorists. While expressing "regret," Salam openly praised Black September leaders for ordering the terrorists to surrender. Libya, Syria, and Iraq continue silent on the Khartoum events.

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CHINA-LAOS: Chinese construction crews continue to extend two road spurs in northwest Laos.

Aerial photography [] shows a motorable road, begun late last year from Nam Tha near the China border, now extending some 45 miles to the southwest. Preliminary clearing extends farther south to within 26 miles of an existing road leading north for 14 miles from Ban Houei Sai, a government held town on the Mekong River facing Thailand. At their present pace, Chinese road crews could easily connect the two roads before the onset of the rainy season in mid-May.

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Thai leaders expressed considerable concern when the Chinese pushed a road through to Pak Beng on the Mekong, about 20 miles north of the Thai border, during mid-1972. If new construction continues toward Ban Houei Sai, Bangkok's concern over Peking's intentions will be rekindled.

Photography [] shows the Chinese are also still working on a road leading from Muong Sing--also near the China border--toward Burma. This road follows an old logging trail and is now motorable for 19 miles southwest of Muong Sing. Preliminary clearing extends to within 11 miles of the Burma border on the Mekong. No government units are in this area and the remaining distance could be covered before the rains begin.

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PHILIPPINES: President Marcos is trying to focus international attention on the Muslim problem in the south and to obtain more US military assistance to deal with it.

In conversations with the US Ambassador and other US officials on Monday, Marcos requested emergency deliveries of US military equipment, particularly helicopters, to overcome what he calls a deteriorating military situation in the south. Marcos said that Muslim actions are "taking on the nature of a definite secessionist movement" and he raised the specter of another Bangladesh. Government spokesmen are publicly blaming "foreign interests" for contributing to rebel military strength.

By expressing greater alarm about the long-standing Muslim problem, President Marcos apparently believes he has a better chance of persuading the US to increase its military assistance program. Marcos' request for US military aid may also be designed in part to obtain some tangible evidence of Washington's support for his administration. Public charges about foreign involvement in the south may also be intended to rally popular nationalist sentiment and boost support for his regime.

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MOROCCO: The celebration of King Hassan's 12th anniversary on the throne went off relatively uneventfully except for a minor terrorist incident.

On Saturday, a group of armed men attacked the administrative headquarters and killed a guard of a remote mountain hamlet some 75 miles southwest of Fez, where the King spent the holiday. Some army units have been alerted and auxiliary units and a helicopter squadron were deployed to the area.

The King in his traditional throne day address to the nation chose to accentuate the positive. He expressed satisfaction with the "solidarity" between the monarchy and the people, enumerated the accomplishments of his regime on domestic and foreign fronts, and noted the "outstanding" performance of the economy under the last five-year plan. He also referred to salary and minimum wage increases that had occurred 18 months ago and affirmed the regime's dedication to the education needs of Moroccan youth. He only referred obliquely to student discontent and the closure last month of the largest school of the university that resulted in a lockout of half of the student body.

In contrast to his recent criticism of the military, he expressed confidence in the armed forces. On the same day, the government released the first military promotion list since the 1971 coup attempt.



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NOTE

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY DEVELOPMENTS: The dollar closed slightly lower against most European currencies in interbank trading yesterday. Trading was light as dealers in the UK awaited the budget speech and those in West Germany prepared for today's religious holiday. Meanwhile, the EC Monetary Committee met to begin work on formulating the EC position for the international monetary conference scheduled for Friday in Paris. It is likely that the EC, among other things, will urge the US to take deflationary measures and to intervene by selling foreign currency in support of the dollar as its contribution to restoring monetary order.

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